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CURRENT SERIAL RECORD

the DURRA STALK BORER



The Durra Stalk Borer

The durra stalk borer¹ is not known to occur in the United States. It may get in. If it does, and if it becomes established, it may cause serious damage to our crops of corn, broomcorn, and sorghums. Resultant financial losses could be heavy. Watch for this insect, and for any other insects you do not recognize. Report them promptly so they may be identified, controlled, and possibly eradicated.

This pest causes severe damage to corn, broomcorn, and sorghums; it also attacks sugarcane and other grasses. It occurs generally in nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea and in some parts of the northern half of Africa.

Infestations of the durra stalk borer have damaged as much as 90 percent of its host plants in southern Italy. In

northeastern Italy it is considered more damaging to corn than the European corn borer. The pest is found in North Africa, East Africa, Greece, along the eastern Mediterranean countries, and in Bulgaria, Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. It is intercepted at U.S. ports of entry in broomcorn shipped from Italy; fumigation is mandatory for these shipments before entry is permitted.

¹ *Sesamia cretica* Led.; family: Noctuidae.



Geographic distribution of the durra stalk borer. Red area indicates part of the world where this pest occurs.

If the durra stalk borer should become established here and cause only a 5-percent reduction in our production of corn and sorghums, the loss would be more than \$2 1/4 million annually. (In 1960 our corn crops were valued at about \$4 billion, and our sorghum crops at about \$645 million.)

DESCRIPTION OF INSECT

The larvae develop through six molts, and become slightly more than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long. At this stage, the head is chestnut brown, the back is pink, and the underparts are yellowish. The pupa is about the same length as the fully grown larva, and is reddish brown. Adults, which are moths, vary in color. Usually their forewings, head, and thorax are pale, yellowish brown. Many adults have dark markings in the center of the forewings. The hind-wings are white, tinged with yellow on the outer parts. Newly deposited egg masses are pale yellow; they change to pink as incubation progresses.



Damage to stalk of corn plant caused by the durra stalk borer.

DESCRIPTION OF DAMAGE

In Italy the durra stalk borer hibernates as a mature or nearly mature larva in stalks of sorghum, corn, or broomcorn. Pupation usually takes place in the stalks. Adults emerge during April and May. Females de-



Left, adult of the durra stalk borer; upper right, pupa; lower right, larva. Enlarged.

posit their eggs singly on leaves or in small masses under the leaf sheaths, and larvae hatch from the eggs. Damage is caused by the larvae. In corn, it is very similar to the damage caused

by the European corn borer. After hatching, the larvae feed first on the leaves; then they bore into the pithy areas of stalks and cobs. Heavily infested stalks bend over and break.

THE PLANT PEST PROBLEM

At least half of our most destructive insects entered the United States from other countries, many before the Plant Quarantine Act of 1912 was passed. Today, thousands of plant pests are intercepted at our borders by plant quarantine inspectors, but some of them still gain entry.

When a new pest is detected, organized efforts are exerted to (1) pinpoint the areas where it has become established, (2) set up a quarantine to prevent spread, and (3) control the pest and eradicate it if possible. The sooner a new pest is detected, the better is the chance of controlling or eradicating it before it does serious damage.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If the durra stalk borer should get into the United States, its larvae probably would be present most months of the year. Watch for this pest in fields of corn, broomcorn, or sorghum. Broken or bent stalks, or leaves closely pressed together, may indicate the presence of larvae. However, it will be difficult to detect durra stalk borer larvae because their damage is so similar to that caused by several other insects.

If you find moths or larvae you do not recognize, send specimens to your nearest agricultural official. Mail them in a small bottle containing rubbing alcohol. Include a note giving your name and address, and telling where the specimens were found and on what plant. Do not send live specimens. If your local agricultural official does not recognize the specimens, he will send them to the proper authorities for identification.

Prepared by
Plant Pest Control Division
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